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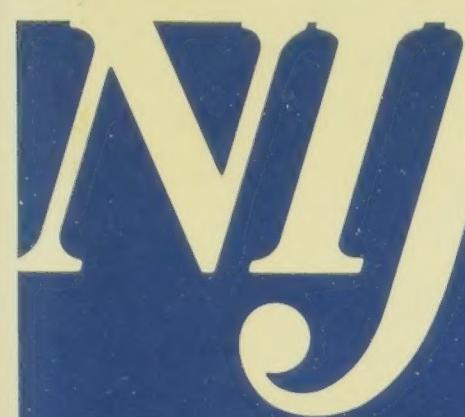


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**NIJ**



National Institute of Justice  
*Research Solicitation*

**Violent  
Criminal Behavior**

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## About the National Institute of Justice

The National Institute of Justice is a research branch of the U.S. Department of Justice. The Institute's mission is to develop knowledge about crime, its causes and control. Priority is given to policy-relevant research that can yield approaches and information State and local agencies can use in preventing and reducing crime. Established in 1979 by the Justice System Improvement Act, NIJ builds upon the foundation laid by the former National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, the first major Federal research program on crime and justice.

Carrying out the mandate assigned by Congress, the National Institute of Justice:

- Sponsors research and development to improve and strengthen the criminal justice system and related civil justice aspects, with a balanced program of basic and applied research.
- Evaluates the effectiveness of federally funded justice improvement programs and identifies programs that promise to be successful if continued or repeated.
- Tests and demonstrates new and improved approaches to strengthen the justice system, and recommends actions that can be taken by Federal, State, and local governments and private organizations and individuals to achieve this goal.
- Disseminates information from research, demonstrations, evaluations, and special programs to Federal, State, and local governments; and serves as an international clearinghouse of justice information.
- Trains criminal justice practitioners in research and evaluation findings, and assists the research community through fellowships and special seminars.

Authority for administering the Institute and awarding grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements is vested in the NIJ Director. An Advisory Board, appointed by the President, assists the Director by recommending policies and priorities and advising on peer review procedures.

Reports of NIJ-sponsored studies are reviewed by Institute officials and staff. The views of outside experts knowledgeable in the report's subject area are also obtained. Publication indicates that the report meets the Institute's standards of technical quality, but it signifies no endorsement of conclusions or recommendations.

James K. Stewart

*Director*



U.S. Department of Justice

National Institute of Justice

Office of the Director

Washington, D.C. 20531

Dear Colleague:

Among the tasks set for government by the nation's founding fathers were establishing justice and ensuring domestic tranquility. In many respects our history reflects the never ending struggle that is necessary to make progress toward these goals.

For reasons that are not well understood, we have over the past generation seen a rise in the level of criminal violence that is unprecedented in our history and unparalleled among modern industrial nations of the free world. Violent crime increasingly affects all of us. During 1982 a violent crime -- a murder, a rape, a robbery or an aggravated assault -- occurred every twenty-five seconds. Indeed homicide has become the leading cause of death among young black males.

These crimes not only bring suffering and hardship to the victims and their families. They affect the quality of life of everyone in our society. Public opinion polls have long shown citizens' grave concern about crime. Indeed, despite some encouraging evidence of recent decreases in crime rates, the latest polls still put crime at the top of the list of social problems in the minds of a large part of the public.

This solicitation, therefore, seeks to focus the creativity of the research community on one of the most distressing and perplexing issues presently facing our society. We need a more thorough understanding of the factors that contribute significantly to violent behavior in individuals coupled with more systematic information about what offenders take into consideration in deciding that a particular crime is something they can get away with. The accumulation of such knowledge cannot help but lead to a more informed and insightful public policy aimed at improved control over criminal violence. We hope that you will find the program of interest.

Sincerely,

James K. Stewart  
Director



## RESEARCH PROGRAM ON VIOLENT CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

### I. INTRODUCTION

Every twenty-three minutes, someone is murdered. Every six minutes a woman is raped. While you read this statement, two people will be robbed in this country and two more will be shot, stabbed or beaten.

The above excerpt from Lois Herrington's "Statement From The Chairman" to The President's Task Force on Victims of Crime (1) dramatically depicts the impact of violent crime on life in America. Although much research has been done since the publication in 1969 of the voluminous report of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (2), our high rate of violent crime persists and indeed continues to remain considerably higher than that of other industrialized countries.

What are the necessary factors that are present in the commission of a crime of violence? We can, of course, logically generalize them to an encounter between a criminally motivated offender and an inadequately defended victim. While this is obviously a tautology, it can at least serve as a modest framework on which to hang a set of somewhat more specific research issues. What does it take to produce a potential for violence in an individual? What psychological or physical traits? What cultural reinforcement? And given the potential, what are the situational factors likely to result in the actual commission of a crime? Specifically, how does the offender estimate his risks? To what degree and under what conditions does he consider the possibility of criminal justice system retribution for his crime?

A better understanding of how all these factors interact is essential to the evolution of informed public policy. Within the particular area of criminal justice policy, such an understanding can lead to a better specification of the levels of criminal sanctions necessary to achieve improved social control through deterrence as well as to a more scientific basis for assessing individual risks of recidivistic violence among known offenders.

### II. SCOPE

The focus of this solicitation is on violent acts that are prohibited by criminal law - specifically homicide, rape, assault and robbery - and on the cost to society of these acts. For the sake of manageability the program does not emphasize somewhat rarer forms of criminal violence such as kidnapping or terrorism. The following list of project areas, while not intended to be complete in its coverage, illustrates the range and variety of the program's interests.

#### A. Comparative Studies in Criminal Violence

Although comparative criminology traditionally deals with the cross-national study of crime as a function of inter-related factors, the primary emphasis intended here is regional or cross-cultural within the United States. For example, Henry Lundsgaarde in his 1977 cultural analysis of Houston homicide patterns (3) has implied that a lenient societal attitude toward murder ("Some folks need killing but

no property needs stealing") may be shared by the criminal justice system. Does the proportion of "justifiable" murder vary from region to region? Are rape sentences lighter where the cultural condemnation of violence is less strong? Just how do cultural and environmental factors interact with social and criminal justice controls to produce differential rates of incidence of violent crime?

**B. Violent Crime and Mental Disorder**

Monahan and Steadman (4) have concluded that the correlates of crime among the mentally ill appear to be the same as the correlates of crime among any other group: age, gender, race, social class and prior criminality. They state further that the correlates of mental disorder among criminal offenders appear to be the same as the correlates of mental illness among other populations: age, social class and previous mental illness. Collins and Schlenger (5) have concluded that the life-time prevalence of psychiatric disorder among male felons is much higher than that in the general population. Brown and Courtless, (6) found that the most frequent crime committed by the incarcerated retardate was criminal homicide, accounting for nearly two out of five of all offenders included in the sample. The issue of violence and mental disorder needs to be systematically investigated to clarify these conflicting reports and to develop information on which policy can be based.

**C. Studies of the Natural History of Criminal Violence**

Further research is necessary to establish the early antecedents of the various kinds of violence and to confirm or deny the relationship among variables such as birth casualty, early neglect, child abuse, learning disabilities, stress as evidenced by physical hypertension, environmental pressures, and situational factors (including alcohol and drugs).

**D. Studies of Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is probably the most common violent crime. There are few reliable statistics available. Estimates of prevalence vary over a wide range depending in part on how "domestic violence" is defined. In addition to the immediate problems caused by abuse of family members, there is a strong conviction on the part of some researchers that children raised in violent homes grow up to be the abusers and the violent criminals of the next generation. Ideas of parental rights and the sanctity of the family frequently stand in the way of research in this area. However, these are important issues and innovative approaches are needed to establish a firmer basis for knowledge and control.

**E. Biological Factors in Violent Crime**

In the past decade a significant amount of criminological research has been concerned with correlating aggressive behavior with biological factors in many areas such as health indices, birth rates, birth casualty, neurology, learning disabilities, nutrition, endocrinology and genetics. Although there has been some indication that biological factors are of more importance in violent than in property crime, this finding has not been entirely consistent. At a minimum there would seem to be a need to integrate and evaluate recent research in these areas in order to determine a course for future research.

#### F. The Social Cost of Violence

Criminal violence comprises only a small part of all crime but contributes disproportionately to the costs of the criminal justice system in terms of police and court costs and longer sentences. To date these costs have not been calculated; nor has the cost to society in terms of disrupted careers, hospital expenses and children made dependent on the state through acts of violence. Realistic modeling and reliable estimation of direct costs to victims and to the criminal justice system would contribute to a more complete appreciation of the magnitude of the problem.

### III. REVIEW PROCESS AND SELECTION

Interested researchers should submit proposals in accordance with Section IV of this announcement.

Two main points to be considered in the proposal review are:

1. To what extent will the research constitute an advance over the existing body of knowledge and contribute new insights to the development of policy?
2. Is the project design as it is described in the proposal both methodologically sound and feasible?

Proposals will be competitively reviewed by a panel of appropriately experienced researchers from outside the agency. This panel will be chaired by the NIJ program manager. The results of the panel's deliberations will be the selection and recommendation of those proposals that would in its view constitute the most worthwhile research program that could be supported with the funds available. Authority to make grant awards, of course, resides in the Director of the National Institute of Justice.

The budget allocation for this program has been tentatively set at \$750,000. It is anticipated that between 5 to 7 grants will be awarded as the result of this competition. Institute policy limits all awards to efforts requiring two years or less. Efforts requiring more than two years to complete should be designed in phases. Selection of the first phase of a project, however, does not guarantee support for subsequent phases. Continuation awards must be submitted for competitive review.

Further, it is recognized that this program budget ordinarily would not be adequate for support of large scale experimental projects or those requiring the collection of large amounts of original data. Limited funds could be provided, however, for design and feasibility studies for such projects. Again, program support for a design study would not imply an NIJ commitment of support for the follow-on project.

### IV. HOW TO APPLY

Eight copies of fully executed proposals should be sent to:

Research Program on Violent Criminal Behavior  
National Institute of Justice  
633 Indiana Ave., N.W., Room 911  
Washington, D.C. 20531

A proposal consists of the following:

1. A completed and signed Federal Assistance application on Standard Form 424 and OJARS Form 4000/3;
2. A budget narrative; and
3. A program narrative.

The program narrative is the technical description of the work to be undertaken. It is on the basis of the information presented in this part of the proposal that the review panel arrives at its funding recommendations. Applicants should be careful to ensure that this section contains clear and complete descriptions of (a) the research questions being addressed; (b) the significance of this work to the overall development of criminal violence knowledge (c) the methodology, research design and general plan for conduct of the work; and (d) the kind of products anticipated as resulting directly from the research (books, journal articles, monographs, etc.).

Applicants should note the requirement that all machine-readable data sets generated in conjunction with NIJ supported research must be provided to NIJ at the end of the project period.

As attachments to the program narrative, applicants are required to furnish a project abstract of not more than 200 words, a short (1 page) schedule of the planned sequence of project activities, and professional resumes of key project personnel.

It is expected that once each year there will be a two-day meeting of senior researchers on all projects being sponsored under this program. Dates and locations of these meetings remain to be decided. All applicants should include \$1,000 for each year or fraction during which the research is to be carried out. The explanation in the budget narrative should state that this is a "standard NIJ estimate to cover expenses of travel to the annual program conference, as directed in the program solicitation."

In order to be eligible for funding, the eight copies of the fully completed proposal must be received at NIJ by close of business on January 23, 1985 or for the second cycle June 5, 1985.

## V. FURTHER INFORMATION

In order to obtain copies of the required application forms or to get further information about the program or the application process, researchers should write to Helen Erskine, Program Manager, Research Program on Violent Criminal Behavior, at the address in Section IV above. Dr. Erskine can be reached by phone at (202) 724-7631. Applicants who have a research idea but are uncertain of its appropriateness for funding under this program are encouraged to call Dr. Erskine and discuss the idea with her before undertaking the considerable amount of effort required to write up a proposal that would be competitive.

Other NIJ programs that may be of interest to applicants include:

**Crime Control Theory and Policy**  
**Drugs, Alcohol and Crime**  
**Classification, Prediction,**  
**Methodology Development**

**Closing Dates: Jan. 9 and May 15, 1985**  
**Closing Dates: Jan. 16 and May 22, 1985**  
**Closing Dates: Jan. 30 and June 12, 1985**

### References

1. Victims of Crime. Final Report of the Presidents Task Force on the Victims of Crime. December, 1982.
2. The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. Staff Reports. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1969.
3. Lundsgaarde, H., Murder in Space City: A Cultural Analysis of Homicide Patterns. Oxford University Press, 1977.
4. Monahan, J., and H. Steadman, Crime and Mental Disorder: An Epidemiological Approach. In Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research. M. Tonry and N. Morris, eds. University of Chicago Press, 1983.
5. Collins J. and W. Schlenger, The Prevalence of Psychiatric Disorder Among Admissions to Prison. Paper presented at the American Society of Criminology, November, 1983.
6. Brown, B. and T. Courtless, The Mentally Retarded Offender. The Presidents' Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967.
7. Gelles, R., Domestic Criminal Violence. In Criminal Violence M. Wolfgang and N. Weiner, eds. Sage Publications, 1982.
8. Monahan, J., The Clinical Prediction of Violent Behavior. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1981.
9. Wolfgang, M. and N. Weiner in collaboration with the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 1982. Annotated bibliographies on violence in the following areas:

Biological Correlates and Determinants	\$ 5.80
Psychological Correlates and Determinants	No cost
Domestic Criminal Violence	\$14.20
Criminal Violence and Race	\$ 5.20
The Violent Offender and the Criminal Justice System	\$ 7.60

Copies are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at the prices indicated. Prepaid orders should be sent to:

National Criminal Justice Reference Center  
1600 Research Blvd., Box 6000  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

**National Institute of Justice**

**James K. Stewart**

*Director*

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